

Protecting Your Computer From Power Surges

by NewsUSA

Computers today consistently pack more power for the dollar than models just a few years old. Faster processing and greater storage has become the norm.

That's good news for value-conscious consumers, but can lull home users into poor practices. With hardware and computer memory so inexpensive, why worry about power surges?

Protection of data is why. As computers have become cheaper, they are being used for more tasks - online banking, online tax filing, financial spreadsheets, storing irreplaceable family photographs, personal address books, family Web pages and more.

Officials with World Energy Solutions, an energy services company based in St. Petersburg, Fla., note that home computer users should protect their computer equipment and data by using the same practices employed by professional information systems managers: data backup, installation of anti-spyware and protection from power surges.

While nature provides the most spectacular surges in the form of lightning, the power company's attempts to handle brownouts, damage to transmission equipment from construction accidents, even household appliances cycling on and off, can create damaging surges. Further, "noise" in AC lines from electric razors, fluorescent lamps and dimmer switches can harm computers.

Point-of-use surge suppressors such as E-Clips offer good protection from most surges except direct lightning strikes. (Damage from such catastrophic strikes can be minimized with proper house grounding and professional installation of surge arrestors outside the house and panel protectors on the electrical panel inside the home.)

When shopping for a plug-in surge suppressor, check to see that the product:

- * is manufactured to meet Underwriters Laboratories 1449 standard;

- * possesses a UL rating of 330 volts (representing the average voltage the device is supposed to allow through);

* offers "round-robin protection" between each of the three wires in an electrical circuit - hot, neutral and ground;

* is "thermally-fused," which means the device will shut off if it overheats.

Data lines, telephone lines and coaxial cables should be protected from surges as well.

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